

Message Text

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S E C R E T MONROVIA 1293

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TAGS: PFOR, AO, LI, US

SUBJ: SOVIET-CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA

REF: (A) STATE 38734, (B) MONROVIA 1245, (C) MONROVIA 1134

1. I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS AT NOON TODAY AND OUTLINED USG POSITION ON CONTINUED SOVIET-CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN ANGOLA AS SET FORTH CPARAS 2 AND 3 REF A. DENNIS RESPONDED MUCH ALONG THE LINES OF HIS COMMENTS DURING OUR FEBRUARY 13 DISCUSSION (MONROVIA 1134) LAYING PARTICULAR STRESS ON THE MODERATES' INABILITY TO DO MUCH BECAUSE U.S. EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAD BEEN ESTOPPED BY THE CONGRESS FROM BEING OF ASSISTANCE. HE SAID UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES HE (A) DOUBTED THAT MOST OAU MEMBERS WOULD BE WILLING TAKE ACTION TO OUST SOVIETS AND CUBANS, SINCE LEGITIMIZATION OF MPLA NOW LEGITIMIZED THEIR PRESENCE (AT INVITATION OF GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA) AND (B) EVEN IF OAU WISHED TO OUST SOVIETS AND CUBANS, WITHOUT USG OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT HELP, OAU DID NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO DO SO. DENNIS ADDED SINCE SOVIETS-CUBANS HAD PUT NETO IN POWER, HE CERTAINLY COULDN'T BE EXPECTED TO OUST THEM NOW AS THAT WOULD BE AN OPEN INVITATION FOR FLNA-UNITA TO RENEW MAJOR HOSTILITIES.

2. I THEN ASKED FOR HIS THOUGHTS ON HOW SOVIET-CUBAN WITHDRAWAL COULD BE EFFECTED. PREFACING HIS REMARKS BY SAYING QTE THESE ARE MY PERSONAL VIEWS UNQTE DENNIS SAID HE THOUGHT ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE TO OBTAIN SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT TOWARD MAJORITY RULE IN NAMIBIA AND/OR ZIMBABWE. HE FORESAW SOVIET-

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CUBAN FORCES CONTINUING ACCROSS ANGOLA/NAMIBIA BORDER FOLLOWING

THE MOPPING-UP IN ANGOLA AND NOT STOPPING UNTIL THEY REACHED THE SOUTH AFRICAN BORDER (IF THEN). HE ALSO FORESAW THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS LENDING SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE TO THE ZIMBABWIANS TO THE EXTENT THAT THE SMITH REGIME WOULD BE OVERTHROWN. HE FORESAW THAT IN BOTH SITUATIONS, THERE WOULD BE HIGH LOSS OF LIFE AND DESTRUCTION. NEVERTHELESS, HE THOUGHT THAT THIS COULD AND PROBABLY WOULD OCCUR BECAUSE IN THE EYES OF BLACK AFRICA, THE KEY ISSUE IS LIBERATION RATHER THAN SOVIET-CUBAN PRESENCE. HE THEN SAID (HAVING REITERATED THE GOL'S FULL UNDERSTANDING OF USG EXECUTIVE BRANCH PROBLEMS WITH CONGRESS) THAT THE MODERATES, NOW BELIEVING THAT USG CAN NOT BE OF ASSISTANCE, CAN NOT RAISE OBJECTIONS IF SOVIETS AND CUBANS PROVIDE THE ASSISTANCE REQUIRED TO BRING ABOUT THE LIBERATION OF NAMIBIA AND ZIMBABWE. THE ONLY WAY HE THOUGHT THAT FURTHER INTERVENTION COULD BE AVOIDED WOULD BE IF QTE VORSTER SETS NAMIBIA FREE UNQTE. THIS, IN HIS VIEW, WOULD GIVE THE MODERATES A LEVER WITH WHICH THEY COULD TRY TO CONVINCE THE RADICALS THAT REASON HAD ENTERED THE PICTURE AND THAT THEY SHOULD WAIT AND SEE IF REASON MIGHT PREVAIL IN ZIMBABWE. FAILING IMMEDIATE FREEDOM FOR NAMIBIA DENNIS PREDICTED QTE A BLOOD-BATH IN THE SOUTH UNQTE.

3. I THEN ASKED DENNIS IF THE PREDICTED BLOOD-BATH AND OTHER POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES WAS NOT SUFFICIENT REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL SOVIETS AND CUBANS NOW. WOULD THAT NOT BE BEST WAY TO AVOID FURTHER BLOODSHED. REITERATING THEN HIS VIEWS IN PARA 2 ABOVE, HE SAID THE ISSUE HAS BECOME SO EMOTIONAL AFRICA-WIDE, THAT HE SAW NO WAY BLOODSHED COULD BE AVOIDED SHORT OF IMMEDIATE FREEDOM FOR NAMIBIA. HE THOUGHT BLACK AFRICA WAS NOW PREPARED FOR FURTHER VIOLENCE REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES.

4. DENNIS THEN SAID THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT AND HE HAD DISCUSSED THE IDEAS OUTLINED IN PARA 2 AND 3 ABOVE AND THAT EH PRESIDENT WAS CONSIDERING COMMUNICATING DIRECTLY WITH PRESIDENT FORD SEEKING USG ASSISTANCE IN BRINGING STRONGER PRESSURE ON VORSTER TO QTE FREE NAMIBIA UNQTE. HE SAID HE THOUGHT PRESIDENT TOLBERT BELIEVES THAT THE ONLY WAY TO GET POSITIVE ACTION FROM VORSTER WAS TO HAVE THOSE POWERS WITH QTE THE VESTED INTERESTS UNQTE IN SA PUT HEAVY PRESSURE ON HIM. HE ASKED WHETHER I THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT WOULD OBJECT TO SUCH A COMMUNICATION. I TOLD HIM THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT WAS ALWAYS FREE TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS TO THE

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USG THROUGH ANY APPROPRIATE CHANNEL HE MIGHT SELECT. KNOWING THAT PRESIDENT FORD HAD ASKED FOR PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S VIEWS, I DID NOT EXPECT THAT PRESIDENT FORD WOULD OBJECT. I THEN ASKED IF IT WOULD NOT BE BETTER, RATHER THAN SINGLE OUT USG, TO APPROACH ALL OF THE MAJOR POWERS HAVING INFLUENCE IN SA AND FOR GOL TO SUGGEST TO OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES TO DO LIKEWISE. DENNIS SAID THEY WERE CONSIDERING DOING SO.

5. AT THIS POINT, DENNIS EXCUSED HIMSELF FROM THE ROOM AND SAID HE WOULD RETURN SHORTLY. HE RETURNED IN ABOUT FIVE MINUTES AND SAID HE HAD JUST REPORTED OUR CONVERSATION TO PRESIDENT TOLBERT, BY PHONE AND THE PRESIDENT HAD DIRECTED HIM TO COME IMMEDIATELY TO HIS BENTOL RESIDENCE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION. DENNIS SAID HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH ME LATER IN THE DAY.

6. DENNIS CALLED ME BACK TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AT 1500 GMT. HE SAID PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAD CONFIRMED THE SUBSTANCE OF THAT WHICH DENNIS HAD TOLD ME IN OUR EARLIER MEETING. HE SAID THAT TOLBERT WOULD BE WRITING TO PRESIDENT FORD AND THAT I COULD EXPECT TOLBERT TO CALL ME IN ON MONDAY OR TUESDAY TO RECEIVE THE LETTER (TOLBERT DEPARTED FOR UPPER BONG COUNTY IMMEDIATELY AFTER TALKING WITH DENNIS AND DENNIS DEPARTS FOR ADDIS ABABA AT 0915 GMT FEBRUARY 21.). HE SAID TOLBERT WOULD ALSO BE COMMUNICATING WITH UKG, FRG, THE NETHERLANDS AND POSSIBLY FRANCE AND CANADA ALONG LINES OF COMMUNICATION BEING SENT TO PRESIDENT FORD. AT THIS STAGE, TOLBERT THINKS THAT IF HE TRIED HAVE OTHER AFRICAN MODERATES JOIN HIM IN THIS INITIATIVE, QTE AFRICAN POLITICS UNQTE WOULD COME INTO PLAY AND DEFEAT HIS OBJECTIVE I.E. IN SOME AFRICAN EYES HE WOULD BE APPEARING TO TRY TO DEVELOP A QTE TOLBERT GROUP UNQTE WHICH WOULD CAUSE CERTAIN OTHER AFRICAN LEADERS TO AUTOMATICALLY OPPOSE HIM.

7. COMMENT: I THINK THAT DENNIS WAS SETTING FORTH WHAT HE AND TOLBERT PERCEIVE TO BE THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION AND WAS NOT TRYING TO DODGE THE ISSUES LAID BEFORE HIM. I THINK THEY CONSIDER THE SITUATION EXTREMELY GRAVE. DENNIS DID NOT APPEAR TO BELIEVE THAT ANY PEACEFUL OR POSITIVE ACTION WILL RESULT FROM UPCOMING CM MEETING. IT WAS THE FULLEST, FRANKEST AND LONGEST (AS THIS MESSAGE REFLECTS) DISCUSSIONS I HAVE HAD WITH DENNIS. I HOPE THAT ANY USE OF THE CONTENT OF THIS MESSAGE WILL RESPECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF HIM COMMENTS TO ME. END COMMENT.

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